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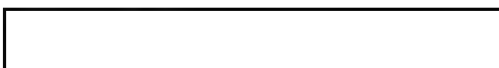
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France-Belgium: [France is stepping up its efforts to induce Belgium to buy Mirage aircraft rather than US F-5s.]

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[To overcome Belgian concern over availability of spare parts for the projected 116 Mirages, Paris had already offered to guarantee never to embargo parts shipments.]

[Despite the favorable French offer, the Belgians have delayed a decision, apparently to avoid appearing to reward Paris when its actions in NATO and the EC have aroused much displeasure in Belgium. Ambassador Knight in Brussels believes, however, that the political deterrent may have subsided and that the Mirage is now the probable choice.]

[One Belgian official has suggested that the US ought to link conclusion of the F-5 contract to any exceptions or concessions made on the new US balance of payments program. The Belgians want to negotiate for special treatment because they are counting on US help in their efforts to revitalize economically-depressed areas of their country.]

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NOTES

*Congo (Kinshasa) - Rwanda: The Congolese decision to break diplomatic relations with Rwanda may be part of a plan designed to shift the blame to Rwanda for the eventual repatriation of the mercenaries. Mobutu has privately expressed a willingness to let all but the mercenary leaders leave for Europe, but apparently feels he cannot publicly sanction the departure. He may reason that, with relations broken, the Congo can now claim it is no longer able to influence what Rwanda does.

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Brazil: [Foreign Minister Magalhaes Pinto continues to refuse Brazil's active support for the US position in Vietnam. He told a visiting US senator on 9 January that Brazilian public opinion is influenced by what the foreign minister sees as disunity among the allies in Vietnam and by news reports that even Americans are not supporting the war. The foreign minister does not believe that the end of the Vietnam war will mean an increase in US aid to Brazil, and he has concluded that conditions for an understanding between the US and Brazil on Vietnam have not yet developed.]

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Algeria: On 5 January Boumediene claimed that Algerian foreign exchange and gold reserves had reached some \$400 million. If Algiers follows the French example of holding 75 percent of its reserves in gold, it could soon convert another \$150 million into gold. It converted \$150 million into gold last November and December.

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